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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Mobutu's New Congo*

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## MOBUTU'S NEW CONGO

Joseph Mobutu, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo Kinshasa), assumed control of the government in 1965, and has given his country better internal security and political stability than it had known since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960. He has gone far toward remaking an unruly army into a fairly effective counterinsurgency force, and the once-formidable rebel bands have been whittled down to small groups of fugitives. Still, Mobutu's hold on power depends on his constant manipulation of key army officers; military discipline remains dubious, and the army is the prime power base.

So far, Mobutu has merely made a good start toward transforming the Congo into a modern national state, drawing power from a reasonably effective administrative structure and a popular political party as well as a loyal army. Presidential and legislative elections scheduled for late 1970 will offer a good measure of Mobutu's attempts to develop broad popular support for his government, but they will not give voters a real choice of candidates. Moreover, his ability to achieve mass support probably depends ultimately on completing the hitherto uneven recovery of the economy, which at the time of independence was among the most advanced in black Africa.



President Joseph Mobutu

President Mobutu will make his first state visit to Washington in early August.

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*Side-stepping the Army*

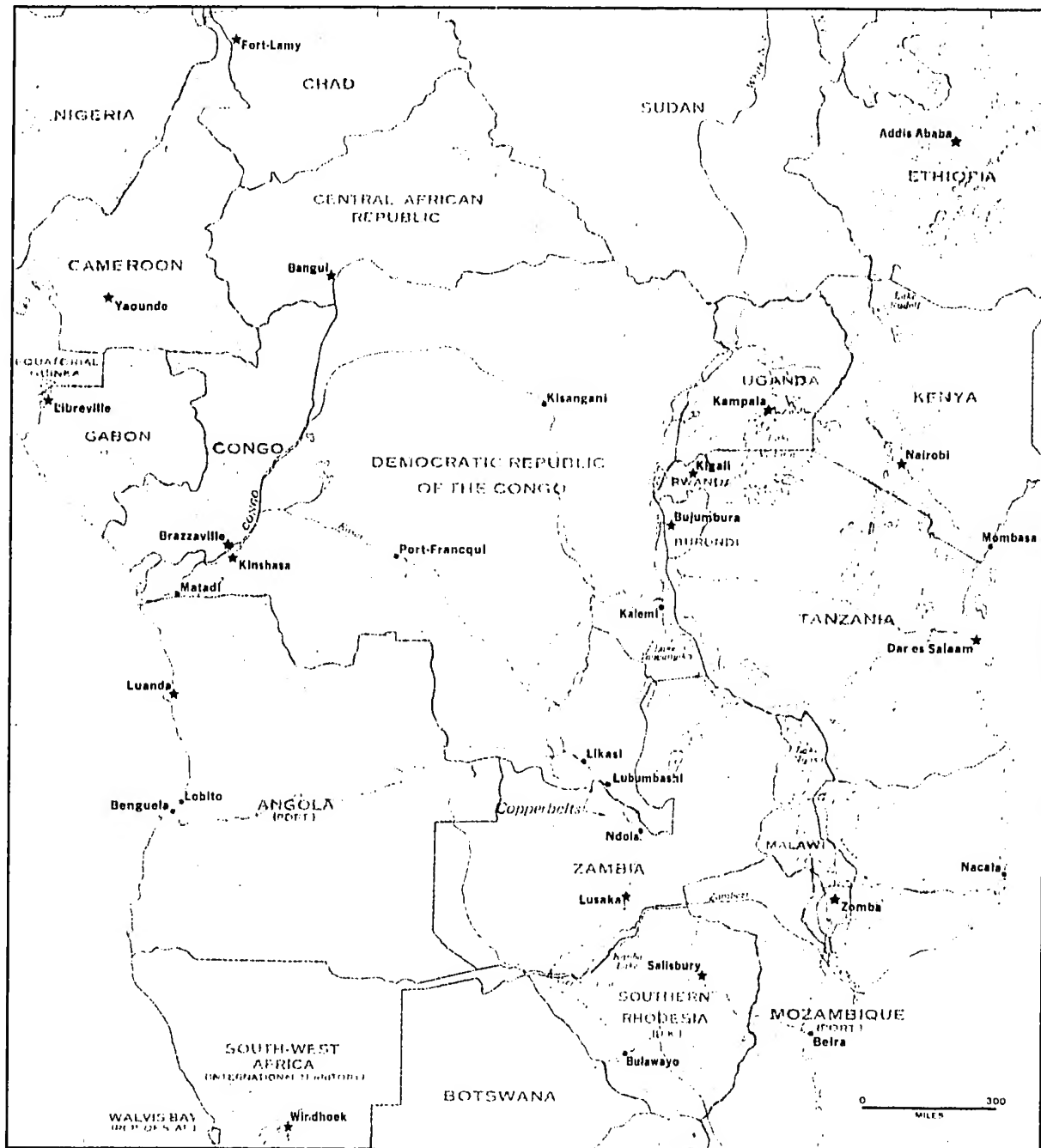
Although Mobutu has held command of the Congolese Army since early 1961, he derived a nonmilitary outlook from his early experience as a student and journalist in Belgium. Although he believes that his people need and expect an authoritarian leader, he also recognizes the army's well-earned reputation for brutality toward civilians. Accordingly, he has cultivated an image that dissociates him from the army and embodies the African traditions of chieftainship.

Retaining a grudging respect for the Belgian colonial administration, he gave first priority in 1966 to reasserting the supreme authority of the national government over the numerous semiautonomous provinces. He has largely succeeded in restoring a centralized administrative structure, staffed almost exclusively with civilians. His undisputed power to appoint, rotate,

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or dismiss government officials has enabled him to dominate the small minority of educated Congolese who aspire to careers in public service.

*Playing down Potential Rivals*

Mobutu's control of the governmental structure has not resulted in effective administration, however. An adequately trained and disciplined civil service is yet to be developed, and Mobutu's practice of rotating field administrators out of their own tribal areas has barely begun to reduce endemic corruption. Because most personnel serving in the provinces are unreliable, Mobutu must depend heavily on the more effective provincial governors and also on a few aides in the office of the President who tour the provinces as trouble-shooters.

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At the cabinet level,

he has replaced influential politicians with people selected primarily for their administrative competence.

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*Supplanting the Parliamentary System*

Mobutu's determination to retain all real authority, while giving the populace a sense of participation, stems from his recollection of how the

Congo's European-style parliamentary system broke down in 1960. Mobutu assumed power in 1965, and declared himself president of the Republic, to end a stalemate between then-president Kasavubu and ousted premier Tshombe. The constitution promulgated in 1967 formalizes the supreme executive authority that Mobutu has asserted since his take-over. The constitution also provides for a reformed National Assembly. This body, which has not yet been elected, is subordinated to the presidency to such an extent that Mobutu will retain control of the legislative process.

Mobutu's instrument for activating the new political system is the Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR), the official party formed in 1967. Although the constitution authorizes two political parties, recent electoral ordinances stipulate that both presidential and National Assembly candidates must be approved by the MPR Political Bureau. In the elections for the National Assembly, voters are to choose between two ballots, signifying approval or rejection of the MPR slate of candidates for each electoral district. In the presidential elections, each voter likewise is to cast a ballot for or against Mobutu, whose candidacy for a second five-year term was announced at the MPR national congress last May. Although the present electoral procedure allows the voters no real choice of candidates, it may be the first step in a gradual process of voter education.

Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled, respectively, for 28-29 November and 12-13 December of this year. All indications are that Mobutu intends the pre-election campaign to be the most intensive effort in public indoctrination since he assumed power. Voting is mandatory for all citizens aged 18 and over who qualify for the franchise, and getting out the vote will require more extensive contacts with the rural populace than most local officials have ever attempted. Since late 1969, Mobutu has spent more time than usual touring outlying areas to stress the importance of the elections, and the recent

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MPR national congress was concerned primarily with preparations for carrying the campaign to every village.

#### *Striving for Mass Support*

Although the MPR will have no visible opposition in the upcoming elections, other factors apparently have convinced Mobutu that the party must campaign vigorously. He wants to placate the minority of educated Congolese who understand the European parliamentary system and still hope that the Congo may eventually attain a truly representative government. There is speculation that in 1975 the MPR will nominate twice as many candidates as there are seats in the National Assembly, and voters can then select which deputies they prefer from the party slate. Meanwhile, the directive that higher education is a criterion for selecting candidates is expected to mollify the more sophisticated critics of the present procedure.

Mobutu's broader objectives may be inferred from the rule that individuals on active duty with the army or police are ineligible to vote or to hold elective office. His "temporary" separation from the army, announced when he accepted the presidential nomination, likewise highlights his deter-

mination to keep the army out of politics. Another indicator of possible future directions is the fact that the members of the MPR Political Bureau—all Mobutu appointees—have been assigned to manage the election campaign in their home districts. As a majority of these people have some prominence outside the governmental hierarchy, their roles in the local campaigns may go far toward developing a party structure that reaches deeper into the hinterland than the central government's administrative hierarchy.

Such a result would be highly significant, as Mobutu's earlier efforts to build a mass organization were largely unsuccessful. Although the MPR has been in existence since 1967, the party's lower echelons in the provinces are still operated by central government officials, who have seldom succeeded in gaining grass-roots support. A basic obstacle is the traditional tribal or regional orientation of the rural populace. Mobutu apparently believes that his control of the modern levers of power is now so firm that he can counteract traditional influences in a mass party and a reformed National Assembly.

#### *The Populace—Apathetic or Discontented?*

Although the 1970 elections are expected to produce an almost unanimous vote of confidence



President Joseph Mobutu Greets Katangan Populace (L) and Meets with Chiefs in Bandundu Province (R)

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for Mobutu, it is conjectural whether the MPR will garner continuing mass participation, or whether a broadly based party will remain subject to control from Kinshasa. Concrete indications of popular attitudes toward the regime are lacking because most rural Congolese have had minimal contact with the central government since the breakdown of the Belgian administrative system in 1960. Concerted efforts to dispel this prolonged isolation and to evoke political consciousness presumably will encounter much apathy and some latent hostility.

exchange holdings, which passed the \$200 million level in early 1970. The favorable balance, however, is due largely to rising copper earnings, while other sectors of the economy have not yet recovered from years of deterioration.

The Congolese who live in urban areas are directly afflicted by the continuing shortcomings in the modern sector of the economy. According to 1969 estimates, fewer Congolese were then regular wage earners than had been in 1959, and wage earners in 1969 comprised barely 12 percent of the total labor force. Although the urban unemployed suffer the most severe privations, wage earners are continually hurt by the rise in the cost of living. Periodic increases in official wage scales have not kept pace with rising prices, and real income for many urban workers has declined almost 50 percent since 1960.

In 1959, a large portion of the rural population was getting some cash income from a highly productive commercial agriculture, but much of the countryside was reduced to virtual anarchy in the early 1960s. By 1969, production of cash crops remained 10 percent below the 1959 level. Most subsistence crops are at or near 1959 levels, although the population has increased by roughly a third during the past decade. Surpluses of traditional food crops, formerly sold to obtain manufactured goods, have all but disappeared. Agricultural recovery has been impeded by the government's failure to maintain or extend the extremely limited network of paved roads. The usually impassable dirt roads also prevent the extension of social services to outlying areas. Consequently, most rural inhabitants have suffered an appreciable lowering of their living standard since 1959.

Except for refugee rebels, Congolese university students have been the most vocal critics of the regime. In June 1969, a student demonstration in Kinshasa resulted in the killing of at least a dozen students by troops, followed by sympathy strikes at other universities and schools. No apparent support, however, was forthcoming from other elements of the population. Most students have sullenly complied with orders to join the youth wing of the MPR and disband their own organizations.

#### *Uneven Recovery of the Economy*

Although the great majority of Congolese have remained politically inert, material privations are so widespread as to provide ample ammunition for anyone who dares to challenge Mobutu on economic grounds. Only a small minority of Congolese have benefited from the extremely uneven recovery of the economy since the disruptions of the early 1960s. Since 1967, increasingly favorable trade balances have brought substantial accumulations in the Congo's gold and foreign

Rural inhabitants are less likely than urban dwellers to blame the authorities for their material privations, as they are more inured to primitive conditions and less politically conscious. Nevertheless, intensified efforts to involve the isolated villagers in MPR activities and to show Mobutu's concern for their welfare may create

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expectations far exceeding the government's administrative capabilities to deliver. Resulting frustrations might give new impetus to the sort of tribal or regional consciousness that Mobutu has been striving to overcome.

#### *Indispensable Foreign Participation*

The government's capabilities for meeting the material needs of the people depend largely on continuing infusions of foreign capital and on the talents of foreign personnel working throughout the country. Although financial aid from foreign governments and international agencies has declined from well over \$200 million annually in the early 1960s to less than \$100 million in 1969, the country still has thousands of highly qualified foreigners—executives, educators, military officers, and technicians who remain indispensable for the foreseeable future. Mobutu has not only extended the use of foreign experts in various government components, but has also engaged foreign firms to operate a number of public utilities and nationalized industrial plants.

The intensive grass-roots campaigning that the MPR is planning for late 1970 may tempt some party spokesmen to exploit latent Congolese resentment against foreign residents in order to curry public favor. Mobutu himself has placed great emphasis on various "Congolization" measures, and as recently as August 1969, a widely publicized drive was initiated to expel all foreigners who were not performing essential services. The targets of this drive, however, were mostly West African and Asian traders. Perhaps an underlying motive was to distract popular attention from Mobutu's extensive utilization of skilled Europeans.

Most indicative of Mobutu's increasing receptivity to foreign participation is the pattern of his dealings with Belgium and Belgian interests in the Congo. The latter were the prime targets of Congolization in 1966, and Belgians residing in the Congo bore the brunt of the hostility aroused by the mutiny of white mercenaries in 1967. The



President Joseph Mobutu with King Baudouin During Visit to Brussels

net result was a sharp cutback in Belgian technical assistance. Since early 1968, however, Mobutu has striven to attract Belgian capital and to secure the services of additional Belgian technicians. The dispute over nationalization of the Belgian-owned copper industry in Katanga was settled amicably last September, and the renewal of cordial relations between the two nations was dramatized through King Baudouin's attendance at the Congo's tenth independence anniversary this June.

The question remains whether foreign resources will be used effectively to promote balanced economic and social development. Mobutu has tried to counterbalance the Belgian presence with increased technical assistance and capital investment from other countries. A multiplicity of foreign-sponsored projects has intensified the need for over-all developmental planning, which is scarcely feasible under Mobutu's personal rule. However genuine his determination to promote effective administration, Mobutu instinctively uses material resources as largesse, to bond personal loyalties and to counterbalance rival power groups.

Mobutu views his relationship with the US as a special one and regards Washington as one of his major foreign backers. He looks forward to

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continued US support for his country's economic recovery and expects the US to continue to provide him with essential equipment for the Congolese armed forces. He is particularly anxious to acquire large US transport aircraft. These topics will undoubtedly be discussed when he visits Washington in August. Mobutu strongly believes that such US support is necessary if the Congo is to play a stabilizing role in Central Africa after years as a disruptive force, and if he is to counter what he regards as an increasing threat to the Congo's security from externally directed Communist elements.

#### *Nine Worrisome Neighbors*

Mobutu also has been preoccupied with the Congo's exposed location, surrounded by eight independent states and Portuguese Angola. He has taken a more active role in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) than any of his predecessors and has made gestures to dramatize Congolese solidarity with southern African nationalist movements. For instance, the Congo provides sanctuary for Holden Roberto's Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE) and for its guerrilla army. By thus repudiating former premier Tshombe's "neocolonialism," Mobutu has been able to induce most of the surrounding independent governments to curtail support for Congolese refugee rebels.

The Portuguese authorities in Angola, however, have reacted to GRAE guerrilla thrusts from Congolese territory by repeatedly blocking copper shipments on the rail line from Katanga to Benguela. Mobutu, in turn, has veered toward unpublicized collaboration with Portuguese authorities, and the Congo's vaunted aid for GRAE guerrillas has been offset by unexplained obstruction of their border-crossing operations. In March 1970, two Portuguese representatives were accepted in Kinshasa with the provisos that they be located in the Spanish Embassy and conduct themselves unobtrusively.

Mingled with Mobutu's primary concern for the Congo's security is a personal ambition to

achieve recognition as an international leader. Although the Congo is a member of the French-sponsored Afro-Malagasy Common Organization, in early 1968 Mobutu drew Chad and the Central African Republic into a mini-common market, apparently to challenge France's economic predominance in central Africa. His efforts to forge economic links with Burundi and Rwanda were at least partially motivated by a desire to supplant Belgian influence. Neither venture, however, has produced solid links, while Mobutu's exaggerated fears of subversive influences from radical Congo (Brazzaville) have driven him to complicity in two abortive coups against President Ngouabi.

#### *Outlook*

Although the elections later this year are expected to produce a one-sided vote of confidence for Mobutu and his party, the grass-roots campaigning and the efforts to generate mass participation in the MPR may have unforeseeable side-effects. If the plan to herd all adults to the polls is carried through, the more isolated tribesmen might naturally look for miracles, and campaign oratory may lead more sophisticated voters to expect more roads, clinics, or schools. If MPR local cadres remain active following the elections, they may generate continuing pressures to distribute largesse much more widely than the regime has hitherto attempted.

The intensified emphasis on the MPR and its activities will rankle many army officers, who have long resented Mobutu's keeping the army in the background. Nevertheless, Mobutu has constantly shown such an alertness for fluctuations in morale that he may forestall serious disaffection among ranking officers or troops by granting additional material benefits. Still obsessed with insurgency threats, Mobutu does in fact have his own plans for beefing up the armed forces during the next few years, even though there are no foreseeable threats of external aggression. Increased military expenditures, however, might preclude meeting popular expectations that the new political order will bring improved living conditions. Mobutu seems capable of finessing the

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dilemmas of heightened expectations for awhile;

[redacted]  
[redacted] Still, pressures for grass-roots economic progress and responsive leadership may build up as traumatic memories of the violent years fade.

Meanwhile, the question of how Mobutu's sudden demise would alter the Congo's prospects

for political stability and economic progress remains essentially unfathomable. The constitution of 1967 does not provide for a vice president; instead, a successor is to be elected within 90 days of the president's death. Mobutu's strategy of counterbalancing actual or potential power blocs does not favor the formation of a cohesive ruling group; nor is he likely to sponsor anyone who might be capable of filling his shoes. [redacted]

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